

A black and white photograph of a hand holding a small, light-colored egg over a nest of leaves. The hand is positioned in the upper right, with the thumb and index finger gently holding the egg. The egg is light-colored and oval-shaped. Below the hand, there are several large, dark leaves with prominent veins, some showing signs of wear or damage. The background is dark and out of focus.

Blooming

UNFOLDED ZINE

2024



The Unfolded Zine is pleased to present the second volume of our yearly zine. Through this collection of writing, illustration, photography, and design from Asian American creatives at Northwestern, we seek to spotlight the diverse talent on our campus and connect with others in reflection about identity, heritage, and culture.

This year's theme, Blooming, encapsulates the growth and changes in our relationships with ourselves, our families, and our environments. These creative works tell the stories of how Asian Americans have bloomed like flower buds through pain, wisdom, beauty, and more.

We are so grateful to everyone who helped make this project a reality. We want to give a special shout out to the Asian Pacific American Coalition for their support through this process. We hope that as you flip through this zine, you find empathy, solace, connection, or anything else that may arise. While recognizing the limits of catch-all categories like "Asian American," we still find community building through identity to be a beautiful thing, and we appreciate the people before us, those who are with us now, and the ones that will come after.

ZINE DIRECTION Ysa Quiballo, Michelle Sheen, Lily Ng, Caitlin Wu

PROMOTIONS Michelle Sheen, Lily Ng, Caitlin Wu

COVER PHOTO Kiran Bhat

6. ***Bloom Under Sunset*** — Seora Kim
Designed by Michelle Sheen

8. ***Cubed Fruit, Cut Meat*** — Juliana Huang
Designed by Sari Richmond

12. ***Bloom Photos*** — Kiran Bhat
Designed by Allison Kim & Phillip Liou

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Designed by Jae Pinkner

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Designed by Ashley Kim

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28. ***Fathers*** — Thrinav Sathya
Designed by Esther Lim

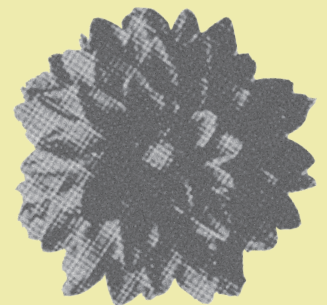
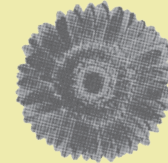
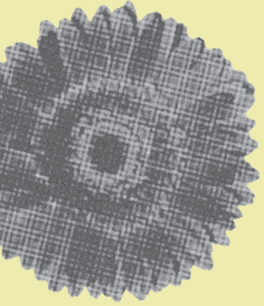
34. ***Reconstruction*** — River Kim
Designed by Ysa Quiballo

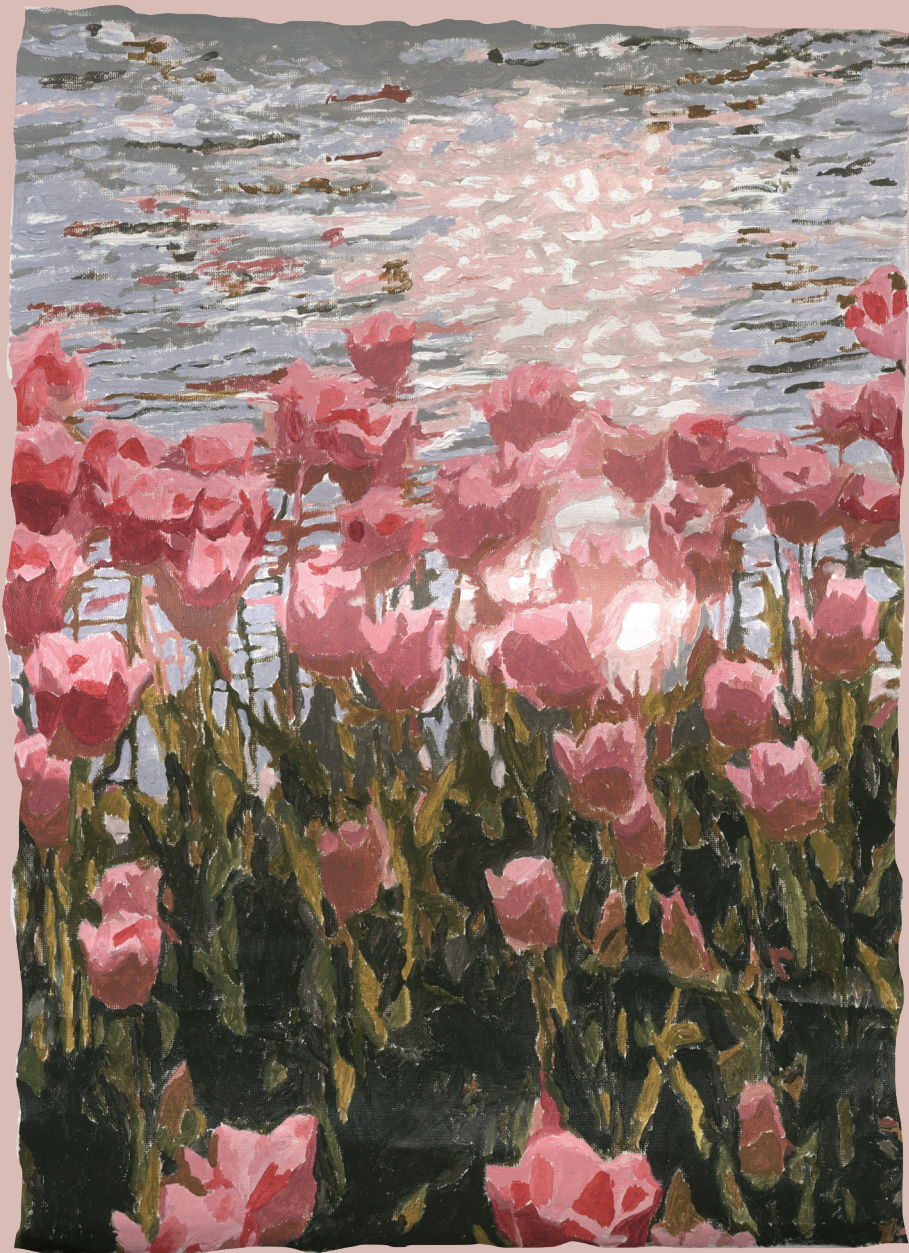
36. ***The Central Artery*** — Roy Zhu
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Designed by June Woo





Bloom under by Seora Kim sunset

My painting of blooming tulips under the sunset by the lake beautifully embodies the theme of "bloom" and resonates deeply with the nuances of navigating Asian identity and the journey of finding one's path while staying connected to one's homeland.

Firstly, the choice of blooming tulips symbolizes growth, renewal, and the unfolding of one's identity over time. As the tulips bloom under the sunset's warm glow, they represent the maturation and evolution of Asian identity amidst the complexities of cultural heritage and personal experiences. Just as the tulips flourish and reach towards the light, individuals navigate their own journeys of self-discovery and empowerment, blossoming into their authentic selves.



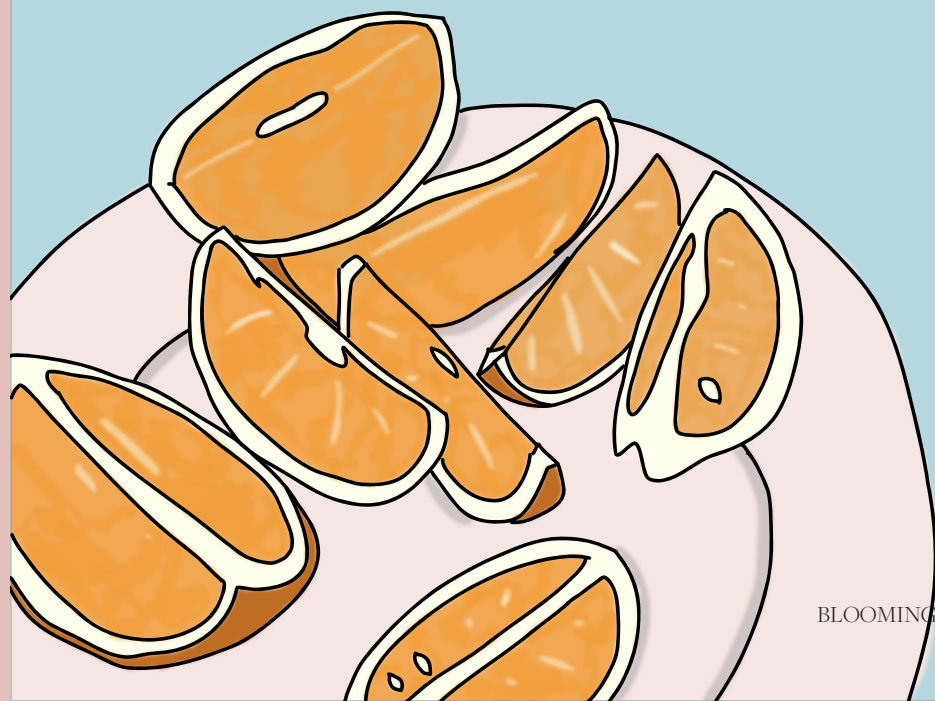
Cubed Fruit, Cut Meat

By Juliana Hung

In the age of high ceilings, high chairs, and hi-chews, I
Wobble towards the chubby crayons and building blocks,
Oblivious to the fruit on the counter. Strawberries
Stressed, peaches pressed under green grapes, to be kissed
By my slobber fingers into flavors so sweet, and

Textures so crisp: handpicked by mom, who switches our lights
Into morning, who slices what's whole into halves, breaks
what's half into quarters, before my big bro brother, my obedient me,
and my la de da sister run out the door —

Welcome back! Welcome in, but before my pen skates across paper,
Before sounding out the string of alphabet letters, better to
Break, from calculations, dancing lines, and stand behind
Dad, who stands in the corner, sawing his cleaver in pork.

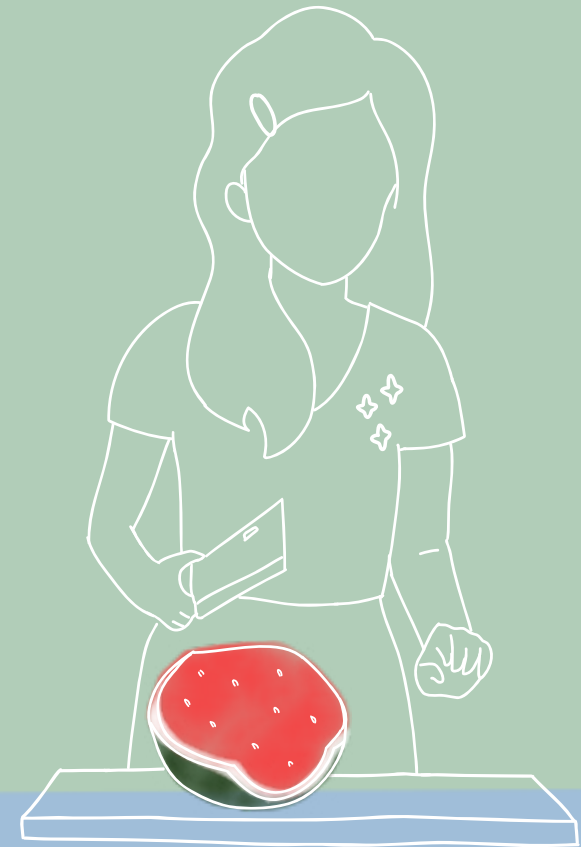
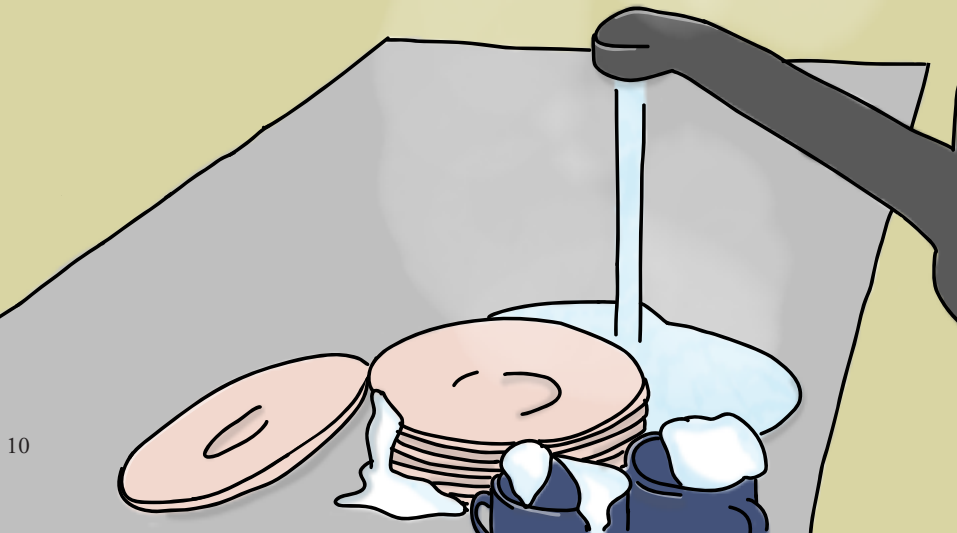


As slimy skin runs underwater, broken bones detach
Underneath, oozing out in fat, temporarily tethered, but
This ick doesn't matter, what matters are his lessons on technique:
Right grips the handle, left knuckles the blade,
To slice on the surface and into raw juices, producing

A progression of sprouts that shoot
Up as I watch from beneath, filling up with
Participation, a situation to spin, wrapping up
With an egg wash finish, a new era of fresh steam —

Welcome back! Come on in, to the age of damp weather,
Breaking cramped rooms with chairs, I search for
Shadows of home. If the chew halls won't do, I

Handpick the groceries, handcut to cubes, all to
Relive in the motions that matter. To care for my dishes
In the same way my family watched me, rubbing soap onto
Plates, rinsing plates in warm water. In the company of droplets,
I suspend in the air, drying, trying to breathe



Memories unfold

Memories unfold

by Kiran Bhat



and begin to
bloom.



seeds planted

patiently



by Kiran Bhat

growing into

memories.



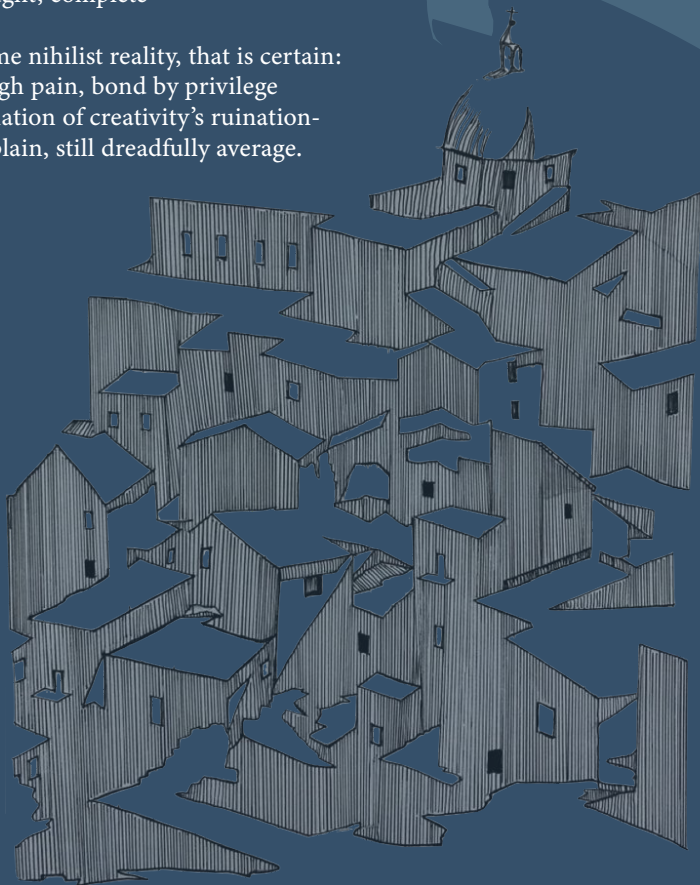
The Silent Thief

by Shirley Zhang

To be carried forward by the tide,
the crowd, its ruinous catastrophe,
to play the tune of the curious loss,
the tragic forfeit of identity,
I lose sight of the purpose
of my walk, my ever pacing
reality. Reality?

An echo of myself became myself;
A version of knowledge betrayed knowledge.
On we march to a pure dystopian realm.
Complete thought; complete

distraught. Some nihilist reality, that is certain:
bondage through pain, bond by privilege
The plentiful nation of creativity's ruination-
still painfully plain, still dreadfully average.



REALITY?

an echo of myself became myself





Some time ago I've learned to suppress
my thoughts, in some unknown corners pressed
between the texts. Stressed, obsessed,
oppressed by his honor Success.
How seductive the concept, how luring the thought?

Reality? Some time ago I lost myself
to the tide, the crowd.
I lost my wealth of power, my voice withheld
from myself. Who am I?

A version of myself shattered myself and was me;
A tale of success replaced success and prevailed.
I have long lost sight of the purpose
of my walk, and yet I walk on
in my ever pacing reality.



melt me

by sherry chen

This piece emerged during my high school years during a period when my single immigrant mother dedicated long hours to work. That left me with ample time for introspection. In her absence, I found myself navigating life's twists and turns independently, discovering the subtle art of self-reliance.

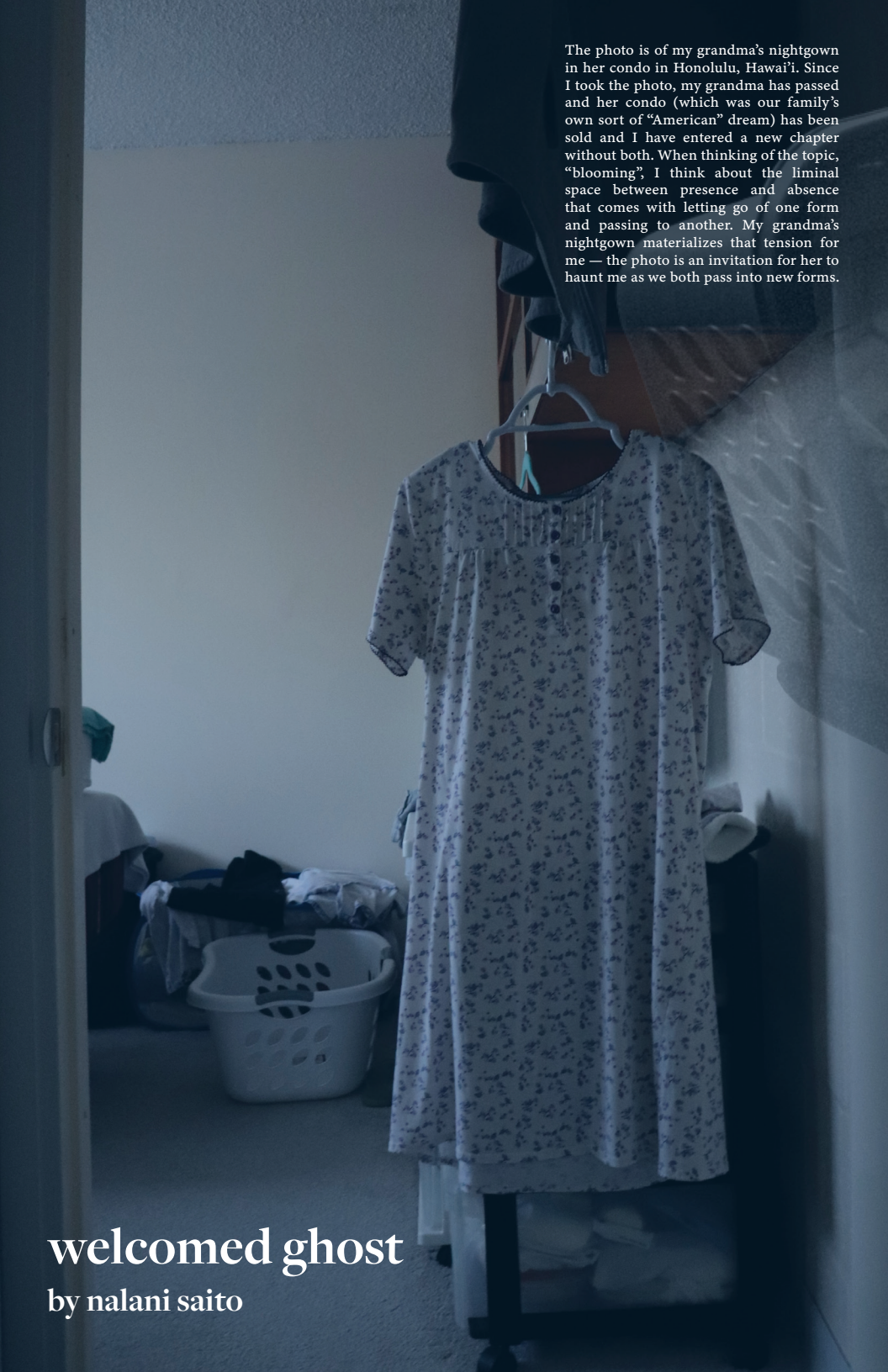




"Dimensional Identities" served as my quiet plea for recognition amidst the backdrop of a predominantly white high school. As an Asian woman, oftentimes I found myself struggling with a sense of displacement. I navigate through the subtle nuances of cultural disparity—spices, foods, even the furniture and appliances felt foreign in comparison to my own upbringing. In an attempt to find my place, I experimented with different personas, sometimes forsaking my Asian heritage in favor of embracing Western customs. Yet, with each attempt at assimilation, I felt a part of myself slipping away, lost in the pursuit of acceptance. My identity was fluid, shifting with each new encounter and situation. I yearned to explore the diverse spectrum of human experiences, to inhabit multiple roles simultaneously—how it feels like to be Asian, Black, White, Hispanic, tall, short, smart, and slow.

dimensional identities

by sherry chen



The photo is of my grandma's nightgown in her condo in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Since I took the photo, my grandma has passed and her condo (which was our family's own sort of "American" dream) has been sold and I have entered a new chapter without both. When thinking of the topic, "blooming", I think about the liminal space between presence and absence that comes with letting go of one form and passing to another. My grandma's nightgown materializes that tension for me — the photo is an invitation for her to haunt me as we both pass into new forms.

welcomed ghost

by nalani saito

a peace offering

by nalani saito

You don't need to carry on with these wars inside. There's space for it all. The pain that's demanding to be felt belongs — you know the one, it's rocking gently in the pit of your gut, denting soft flesh with its weight. The pleasure that's spilling over, too, glistening clear as it coats what's raw. A landscape, an ecosystem that does what it will to coexist, to find its place in the generative order of things. I promise you, Love, we can hold it all.

Final days 19

by Huang Yiran



This is an ode to adulthood,
And a love letter to my youth.

With these ends and farewells,
May this pain be acknowledged
With the beauty of life,
And gratitude for the breaths we've
taken.

It is only after these departures
That I arrive at this dock,
Still unprepared,
Trying not let go.

I write to console my past, present,
And future self. And I curse
This cruel clock
That continues to click
As time slips away.

Yet it is also this clock
That has gifted us these
Fleeting moments and memories.
The minutes that will forever stay
with me.

With the sun in my palms,
On a cliff watching,
The moon slowly drifts away,
The tides change forever,
The stars blink an unfamiliar pattern.

Here, I stand
Still.



FATHERS

BY

THRINAV SATHYA

© nigh. ts. hade

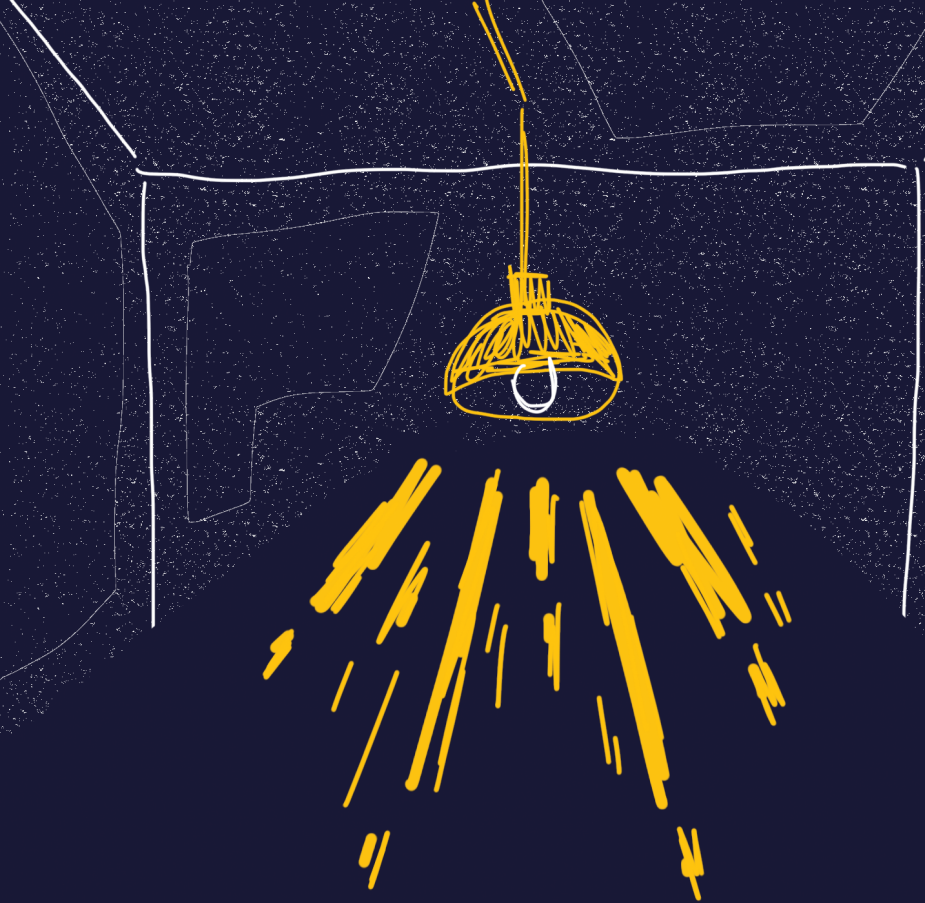
WHEN I WAS A CHILD
MY FATHER WOULD RAISE A HAND
OR SOMETIMES BOTH.

HE TOLD ME ONCE THAT PRESSURE MAKES
DIAMONDS
OF COURSE I BELIEVED HIM.
I THINK WITH TIME HE REALIZED
THE CONTINENTS MAY ROAR AND GRIEVE
BUT AT A CERTAIN POINT THE DIAMOND

BUT ONE DAY
HE STOPPED AND SAID,

"YOU'VE GROWN UP
AND IT JUST WOULDN'T FEEL RIGHT."

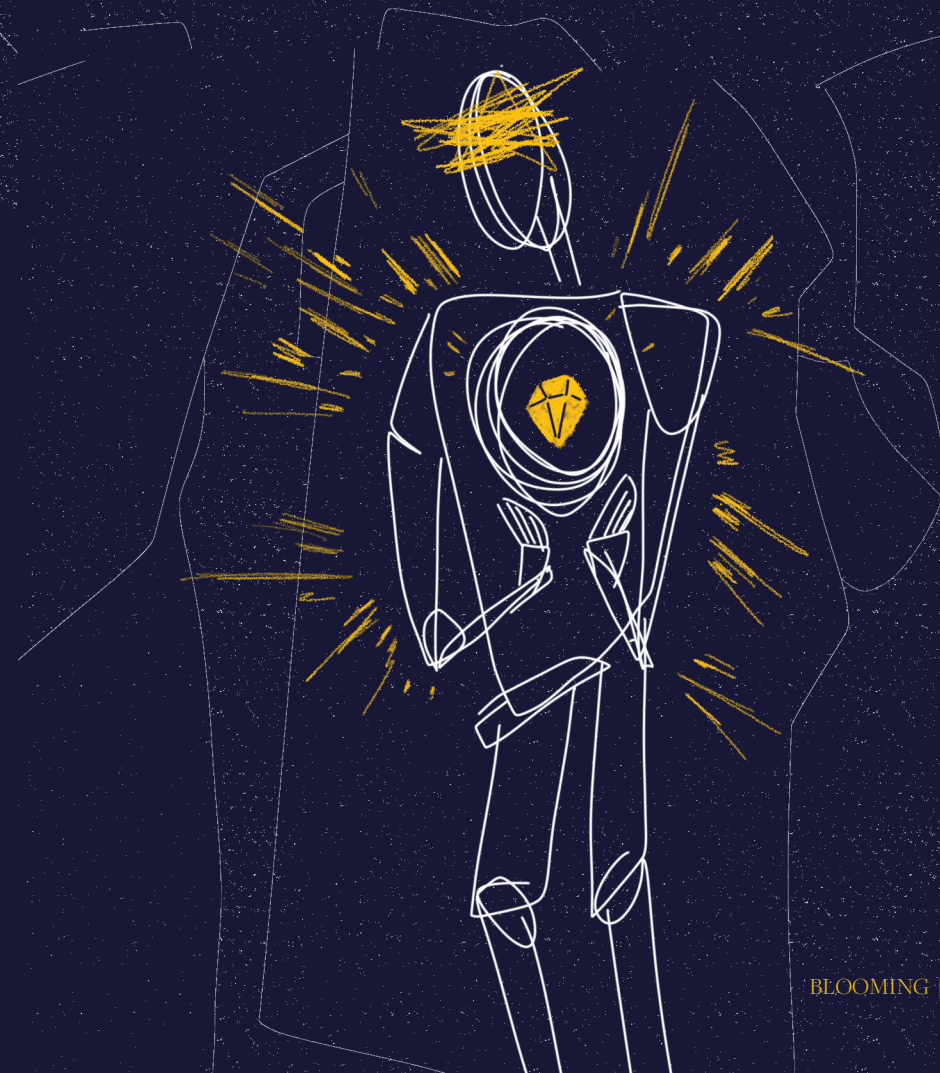




AT A CERTAIN POINT
YOU HEAR YOUR FATHER'S VOICE IN YOUR HEAD
WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT.



THERE IS NO GREATER HORROR
THAN RAISING YOUR VOICE
AND REALIZING YOU SOUND FAMILIAR.



reconstruction

by river kim

"Dimensional Identities" served as my quiet plea for recognition amidst the backdrop of a predominantly white high school. As an Asian woman, oftentimes I found myself struggling with a sense of displacement. I navigate through the subtle nuances of cultural disparity—spices, foods, even the furniture and appliances felt foreign in comparison to my own upbringing. In an attempt to find my place, I experimented with different personas, sometimes forsaking my Asian heritage in favor of embracing Western customs. Yet, with each attempt at assimilation, I felt a part of myself slipping away, lost in the pursuit of acceptance. My identity was fluid, shifting with each new encounter and situation. I yearned to explore the diverse spectrum of human experiences, to inhabit multiple roles simultaneously—how it feels like to be Asian, Black, White, Hispanic, tall, short, smart, and slow.



BY ROY ZHU

The Central Artery

BY ROY ZHU

"I gazed up at the tall, gray, concrete wall and the ramp that ran along the top of it. The rubber tires of cars and trucks sped up the ramp and rumbled onto the Southeast Expressway. This wall cast a dark shadow over the edge of Hudson Street and over the remaining red brick townhouses, blocking out, forever, any possibility of sunlight-drenched living rooms. New immigrants from China and visitors to Boston's Chinatown see the wall as always having been there, supporting the ramp that was built so South Shore residents could get home faster from their downtown jobs."

— **Cynthia Yee**, *Hudson St. historian*

Massachusetts Turnpike Authority initiates *renewal*
she cleaves streets like *Hudson*, renaming them by her own ritual:
I-90, the language of a higher power shifting the hills from above.
How does it feel? to be a part of *commerce*,
to tip your cigar out your window as you deposit ash on heads below.

I-90 will save you.
Massachusetts Turnpike Authority ejaculates businessmen
enthralled by the space age: missile-quick shipping, leaded gasoline.
Their cars spill oil, rainbowed with possibility,
into waters festering with industry.
Dark tides of asphalt numb the roots of trees.

The businessmen are startled to see, in the shadows of
their well-tended yards, the weeds. Out sprout the roots
of the migrant weeds.

In her calloused hands, the Chinese woman holds familiar ailanthus leaves. For a second, it almost smells like springtime.

There is no springtime in a foreign land. Only rain at the wrong time of year.
She sees her daughter playing outside, making of the weeds, a child's magic garden.
With a stick her daughter traces anthills, such miracles witnessed from above.

Deliverance, the preacher says, *is the road to the city on a hill*.
So the road to Boston delivers and delivers.



The cars weave like Chinese women do in the shops of white men:
the garment district, such a tasteful name for sweat-shops that dot
the sweet, soft armpit of the city.

On I-90, five lanes segregate the air.
Thickets of cars beg to be cleansed of the soft soil,
the tiny patches of azure, jade, gold, vermilion below.

My city,
the mother teachers
her daughter in Taishanese.
My city? My city.

Her daughter
rolls such old words carelessly,
and Ma knows her own heart is old.

The road slowly widens.
Tears down the cheeks of Chinatown.

BY ROY ZHU

Her daughter learns two languages, learns a third language all her own.

The street of the goddess of beggars.

Cynthia is her name, the daughter of the goddess of beggars.

Ma is cramping from the sewing,

her garden is dying as the interstate ramp blocks out the sunlight.

She sings to her daughter in the moonlight, says, *never leave me, my child.*

Her eyes are masters of sacrifice blessing the distance between them.

Once I go, she whispers,

look for me in the wind that eddies the ailanthus leaves.

Then you may cry for me

light the incense, eat a rich man's meal.

Pour out a portion of old Chang's wine.

Do as you know.

In autumn, her strong-boned daughter cries

Mother, mother as she walks up

the newbuilt road.



We're always sinking these days.
It's the kitchen timer that fishes me out.
I consider letting the *bao zi* burn, but
I made them for you.

Pry apart the dough to find the insides
still raw. As the buns try to hold themselves
together, I try to make myself feel
sorry I forgot you.

Hard to Swallow

by Joyce Li



your umbrella-cane and my too-big shoes smacking sidewalk stones in syncopation

your speckled worn-leather hand guiding mine through the strokes of my name

a song from your army days wrapped in the sepia lilt of a hakka accent

your skin like rice paper pressing down pockets of kneaded dough

lead bursting over the character for peace

lips bruised like stained glass singing me to sleep

my english textbooks scattered flour-dusted on the counter

eight years stretching between you and the plane that took me

in the engine's roar i mistook the sound of severance for a fresh start

Rise with the steamer's milky heat. I didn't know
until I began that I can only learn so much
by watching. Rush of hot air scalding cold hands like
spirits at daylight.

Floors swept, pots scrubbed, every trace of you
sponged away like I had never tried. Brushing by
your ghost on my way out, resurrection
is harder than it looks

Speaking to You

(from a wet summer)

by Ann Gaither



You speak to me
still—the tinny waves
struggle
through
the sludge
to my ears.



Seven children under a wooden bed,
metal leaking from the skies:

one past.



You speak to me.
Still,
you speak to me as if you are already
past.
And perhaps you are.

I lie
suffocating on wet air,
as you did.



Past leaks from my eyes.
As it does from yours.

i. when i was

falling

It wasn't a coincidence we found each other, it wasn't as simple as luck. Our lives were intertwined not because of the stars but because it was you and it was me. You, whose presence was like summer itself, and me, who had not known of such a season.

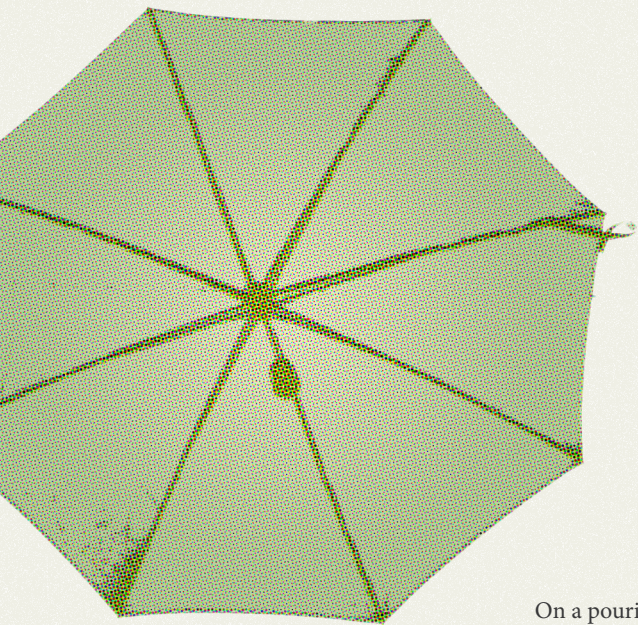
Under a thundering Autumn sky, running to find shelter and pushing passersby, I abandoned a can of cold cider. Your hands came to me first before I realized that you were holding the can I had let spill onto the cracked sidewalk. Extending your arm to me, you gave me the chance to undo my mistake. It wasn't that you wanted to direct others how to live. It wasn't that you wanted to make me feel little. Simply, you believed I was more than a spilled can of soda. You forgave me so I could forgive myself. You never told me yet I knew.

As days became shorter, we were met with moonlight sooner. The flowers had reached their peak, but we had not. It wasn't that the things we did were spectacular, simply you were spectacular. It wasn't that you made me want to believe that summer was real, you proved it.

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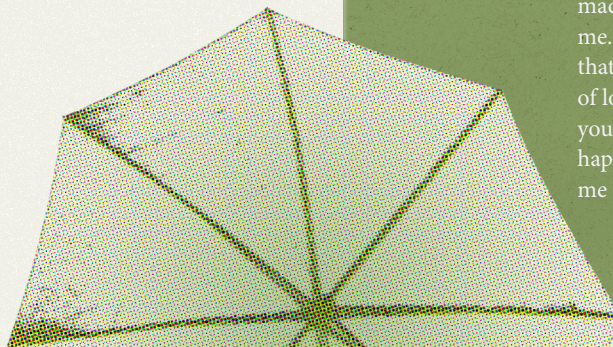
by megan lin



ii. summer rain

On a pouring yet sunny day in July, my eyes met your shining pupils with only a red traffic light separating us. When the light switched, it wasn't a fairy tale moment. But it was the moment time stopped. The only things in motion were my heart and my reality that was you. My reality—my world: you were the only thing guaranteed. As drops fell onto your hair, I jumped into your open arms and smiling cheeks. We embraced in the rain, embracing the rain as the sun looked on.

That summer came with endless downpours. It was you who held me as I sobbed, curled up and panting with my fists clenched. It was I who bandaged your wounds and held you when your legs felt weak. Many things were thrust at us in the storm, but together we survived. Still, in the flood, the summer started to fade.



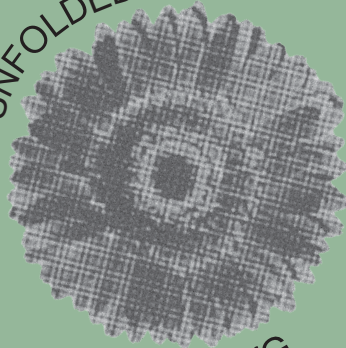
iii. *let the fall come*

One day, you never came back yet I still feel your warmth. When the leaves fell and the flowers withered, my heart continued to beat in the rhythm of the breaths we shared. The rain continued into fall and winter. I was left with a sense of courage. The courage to smile at the sky as the rain splashes my face. And face whatever comes my way. Summer ended but the camellias bloomed again under a clear sky. Clouds come and go so let me embrace it, both in their coming and parting.

I cannot say we met at the wrong time because you were what made that time right. The time when I had you and you had me. When the summer rain fell and the daisies rose. That time that was filled with our laughter of bliss, cries of grief, and eyes of love. Loving the moments that come and go. Running to you to find comfort. Comforting me through it all. All that has happened that we can't get back. Back to the Summer you loved me endlessly.



UNFOLDED ZINE



BLOOMING